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THE HORSESHOERS' STRIKE OF PHILADELPHIA.¹

LABOR has found the union its most effective weapon in wringing unwilling concessions from the hands of capital; while capital has, in turn, found association or agreement the most effective means of resisting what it deems the unreasonable demands of labor. But, in a competitive system, the temptation to disregard agreements for the sake of personal aggrandizement is much greater for capital than for labor. Although done with all outward show of good faith, such breaches of contract are sure to be discovered sooner or later, causing dissent among those who could otherwise unite for a common cause. Labor always profits by this dissent. Such was the situation among the horseshoers of Philadelphia in June of the present year, which resulted in a strike of the journeymen. Though purely local, this strike is, nevertheless, of much interest to all who are concerned with labor problems.

The strike was begun on June 9, 1902, by the Journeymen Horseshoers, Local No. 6, against the Master Horseshoers' Protective Association, Local No. 23. The strike lasted over a week, in which time both parties were in constant conference. Before entering into the causes of the strike and the demands of the strikers, it may be well to give a few words in explanation of the classes of men engaged in the horseshoers' trade. A complete shop includes a master, journeymen, and apprentices. The masters and journeymen are organized in unions, while the apprentices join the ranks of the journeymen as their term of apprenticeship expires.

THE MASTER HORSESHOERS' PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION.

The Master Horseshoers' Protective Association is an incorporated body which was organized under the laws of Pennsyl-

¹ For the facts contained in this article the writer is indebted to Professor John W. Adams, of the University of Pennsylvania, a member of the Master Horseshoers' Protective Association, and chairman of their committee to settle the strike.

vania in June, 1893, and reorganized in November, 1897. Now, a "master" is simply an employing horseshoer paying wages to men under him; but to be eligible to the association he must, according to the constitution, have worked at the trade and served the required term of apprenticeship. These qualifications, however, are not always strictly insisted upon; for a widow of a master horseshoer is allowed to continue his business by paying the regular dues of the association. Again, Professor John W. Adams, of the University of Pennsylvania, represents as a master horseshoer the "shop" of the Veterinary School, an institution which was obliged to join the association as the result of the adoption of a stamp by the National Horseshoers' Protective Association in 1898. The use of this stamp is regulated by the by-laws of the local association. Thus, the members of the association are not permitted to drive or tighten shoes that have not been put on and stamped by a member of the association. The stamp, however, can be put upon new shoes only at the time they are fitted, and a heavy penalty is imposed upon any member keeping stamped shoes in stock. In addition to the stamp of the national association, each member must stamp his own name on each shoe which is put on a horse in his shop. The object of the stamp is to be able to discriminate against non-union shops. Thus, if a horse shod in a non-union shop should lose a shoe and be taken by his owner to a union shop to have the shoe replaced, the union shop will refuse to do the work. But union men will gladly put on one or more new shoes bearing their own stamp.

The preamble of the constitution of the masters' association states that "one of the grand objects" of the association is to rescue their trade from the conditions into which it has fallen; to elevate themselves to that condition in society to which they, as mechanics, hold themselves justly entitled; to place themselves on a foundation sufficiently strong to secure themselves from further encroachments; and to elevate the conditions of their industry in Philadelphia and vicinity.

Further objects of their association are set forth in Art. II of the constitution, as follows :

OBJECTS.

SECTION 1. For the purpose of promoting concert of action amongst our members relative to reforming present methods of competing for work and adopting a uniform scale of prices.

SEC. 2. To eliminate from our ranks all incompetent hands who bring discredit upon our trade, much to our injury.

SEC. 3. To assist and encourage each other in business necessitates ever being actuated by the peculiarities of brotherhood, which bind us together in a common cause.

SEC. 4. To enjoy the advantages of mutual improvement and aim to elevate the craft generally; to decide all differences that may arise in and between our members, and in general to determine and to decide upon all customs and usages affecting the trade or business interests of the craft. The decisions of this association shall be subject to an appeal to the National Horseshoers' Protective Association.

The real cause for the formation of the association was that stated in the preamble. For ruinous competition had so lowered the price of shoeing that there was little profit in the trade. The formation of the association did much to promote the objects of its incorporation, but the journeymen were not slow to see that, as employees, they could also materially better their own condition by concerted action in an organized union.

THE JOURNEYMEN HORSESHOERS.

Journeymen horseshoers are divided into two classes, viz., floormen and firemen. A "floorman" works on the floor, receives the horse when it enters the shop, removes the old shoes, prepares the hoof for the new shoes, and drives the new shoes. The chief duties of a "fireman" are choosing and fitting machine-made shoes, or making new shoes from the "bar" and fitting them.

In order to be eligible as a journeyman horseshoer one must have served an apprenticeship of four years and be able to command minimum wages. For the past two years the journeymen horseshoers in Philadelphia have received the following minimum wages by agreement with the masters as the result of a former strike: Floormen receive a minimum wage of \$2.75 per day, and firemen a minimum wage of \$3 per day. Men working both on the floor and at the fire, as they are compelled to do in

the smaller shops, receive a minimum of \$3 per day. Furthermore, the masters agreed to employ none but union journeymen. This promise, the journeymen maintain, has not been kept by all union shops, and there has been some talk among them of adopting a stamp to be used on all shoes made or put on by union men. The effect of such a stamp would be to render the masters' stamp useless, for by its use the journeymen would at once be aware of the employment of non-union men in the masters' shops. They would then refuse to work on horses wearing shoes that did not bear the journeymen's stamp, regardless of whether they bore the masters' or not. Many of the masters feared that this would be the next move of the journeymen in case they should come out victorious in the strike here under consideration, and this partly accounts for the way in which the final settlement was made.

THE DEMANDS OF THE JOURNEYMEN.

The demands of the journeymen horseshoers in the present strike may be divided into major demands and lesser demands. The former are chiefly concerned with the hours of labor, upon which the journeymen refused to compromise. They demanded a nine-hour working day with a half holiday on Saturdays during the months of June, July, and August, and that the shops close at 4 p. m. on Saturday during the remainder of the year. They asked no increase in wages, but were content with their present wages at the reduced hours asked for.

Among their lesser demands they insisted that fifty cents an hour should be paid for all overtime work, for every hour or fraction thereof. They refused to do any overtime work during the hot months. Overtime work was to be allowed only during the time of "sharpening" (sharpening consists in welding sharp calks on the shoes, when ice and snow frequently render this necessary to prevent slipping). The journeymen also asked that they be allowed one day in each year (in common) as an outing day.

All that the Philadelphia journeymen demanded had already been granted to journeymen horseshoers in New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus, O. And so the

local union of Philadelphia naturally felt that its demands were reasonable and just.

A month before the strike was ordered, printed notices were sent to all the masters in the city, comprising about two hundred and seventy-five shops, notifying them of the demands of the journeymen and giving them a month in which to comply with the same, or to meet them in conference and arbitrate their differences. All of the shops in the city, except about twenty-five, refused outright to consider the notice. Now, the journeymen's union controls about eight hundred men, or about nine-tenths of the men engaged in their trade. When the time expired, and their demands remained unheeded, a general strike was ordered, and all the journeymen were called out except in the twenty-five shops whose masters had signed the demands. The masters' union quickly convened and brought pressure to bear on these shops, under penalty of heavy fine, to retract their position. This brought all but one or two shops into line, and the journeymen in these shops were then quickly called out.

Thus the situation remained for a week, with all the shops (except the "scabs," which numbered about twenty-five) tied up, doing only such work as the masters and their apprentices could do, which was little enough, as some of them are unable to shoe a horse. The masters remained resolute in the belief that the journeymen would soon flock back to work, because of the fact that the highest-paid journeymen were averse to the strike. Their hopes were not realized, but they decided to hold out and import new men. An outside agent agreed to place forty new men in the shops under the condition that they should be employed permanently and not be turned off as soon as the strike was over. These men were not brought in, however, for the testimony of those who had employed men sent to them in this emergency was so unfavorable that the wisdom of a wholesale importation of new men was seriously questioned. The experience of those who had imported new men was like that in most strikes where the same expedient has been resorted to, viz.: the new men were either incapable or were quickly drawn into the union and the strike. The journeymen were busy proselyting, and even drew

many of the men from the local "scab" shops into their union; and, encouraged by their success when the strike was on, they refused to compromise, but insisted that their original demands be granted *in toto*. And the fact that the better shops were desirous of granting the demands of the journeymen at once caused dissent among the masters themselves. The majority of the masters, however, were averse to giving in, and the reasons ascribed for their holding out show that the masters' association has failed to carry out one of the chief objects for which it was incorporated (see above, sec. 1). Two years ago the masters adopted a scale of prices for shoeing, claiming that they were forced to raise prices because of the increase in the price of iron and the greater wages they were obliged to pay their men. The scale of prices adopted was as follows: work horses, full set of shoes (rough shoeing), \$2; coach horses, full set of shoes, with or without heel and toe calks, \$2.50; light driving horses, shoes, \$3 per set; and special shoes, such as bar shoes, \$0.75 each. These prices, however, have not been uniformly maintained. Rebates are quite general, being made in the form of cash rebates to firms or corporations having a large number of horses. Rebates of one-fifth to coachmen have also become so common that the coachman demands it as his just due. And if his employer should insist upon his horses being shod where the rebate is not given, the coachman employs every means possible to demonstrate to his employer that the workmanship in that particular shop is very inferior. He loosens shoes or actually goes to the extreme of rendering a horse lame to prove his point, until his employer, tired of being annoyed, tells him to take the horses wherever they can be shod right. This is only one of the ways in which the coachman exploits his employer. He does it everywhere—at the horse market, the carriage shop, the harness shop, the feed store, etc.

The better shops maintain the scale of prices, and were willing to concede the demands of the journeymen; and they openly accuse those who hold out of doing cheap shoeing or of giving large rebates. For, if they grant the demands of the journeymen, they will have to maintain the scheduled prices in order to

work at a profit, and they know that as soon as they refuse to give rebates much of their trade will go elsewhere. Thus it is evident that there is an outside and an inside force at work to compel the masters to live up to the rules of their own organization or disband.

After long discussion and debate the masters agreed in committee to recommend as a basis of agreement and compromise to settle the strike upon the following terms: The hours of labor should be ten every day but Saturday. The shops should close at 1 P. M. on Saturdays during the months of June, July, August, and September, and at 4 P. M. on Saturday the rest of the year. The men were to receive only *pro rata* pay for overtime for the first hour, and fifty cents for every additional hour or fraction thereof. No overtime work would be asked of the men except during "sharpening." The holiday demanded by the journeymen would be granted, provided that hereafter the journeymen would choose for their outing the same day as the one provided for the masters in the constitution of their association, in order that the shops would not have to be closed on two different days. This report of the committee was unanimously agreed upon by the masters in meeting. And the committee was instructed to appear before the assembled journeymen and present their recommendations as agreed upon. The committee appeared before the journeymen the next day, and, after presenting arguments in its favor, the recommendation was read and the committee retired.

In a few minutes the journeymen reported to them through a committee of five that the recommendations of the masters had been considered in detail and rejected *in toto*. The nine-hour day was the chief thing that the journeymen were determined to win. The committee of the masters, having power to act, proposed further concessions, which amounted to conceding all of the demands of the journeymen, but deferring the time when they should go into operation. They argued that their patrons would suffer much inconvenience unless sufficient time was given to acquaint them of the new schedule. Accordingly they agreed to settle the strike on the following basis: That the hours of

labor should be ten for the first five days of the week, with a half holiday on Saturday, until August 1, 1902, after which the hours of labor were to be nine daily, with a half holiday on Saturday during June, July, and August, and the shops to close at 4 P. M. on the remaining Saturdays of the year. All overtime was to be paid according to the demands of the journeymen. The annual holiday was conceded without specifying when it should be taken. These propositions were presented to the journeymen and rejected within fifteen minutes. The chairman of their committee suggested to the chairman of the masters' committee that if the propositions just rejected were made to go into operation July 15, instead of August 1, he was quite sure they would be accepted by the journeymen, as they deemed a month's time enough for the masters to notify their patrons of the new schedule. Upon this, however, the masters could come to no agreement. But the larger shops, anxious to concede the demands of the journeymen and begin work on Monday, June 16, decided to act individually. Nor were threats of penalty for so doing effective. Finally, to prevent a breakup of the masters' union itself, it was necessary to pass a resolution that no fines or penalties should be imposed upon those masters who wished to sign the agreement with the journeymen and begin work. But they were urged to do with as few men as possible, so as to compel as many journeymen as possible to remain out of employment. It was decided that the demands of the journeymen should not be signed by the president and secretary, but each master left to act for himself. The result was that the agreement was soon signed by all of the shops that had been in favor of doing so from the first; and a majority of the others soon found themselves obliged to do the same in order to hold their trade, as no shoeing had been done in the city for a week. Thus the short-sighted policy of those masters who favored holding out resulted only in keeping their shops closed without profit, whereas they might have gained a month at the old schedule, had they been willing to allow their own recommendations to go into effect July 15.

FRANK E. HORACK.